DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 229 694 CG 016 665

AUTHOR Gray, Denis
TITLE A Competency Oriented Small Group Intervention: Older Worker Job Club.
SPONS AGENCY Administration on Aging (DHHS), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 27 Aug 82
GRANT AOA-90-AT-2020/01
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (90th, Washington, DC, August 23-27, 1982).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Employment; Group Dynamics; *Group Experience; *Job Applicants; *Job Search Methods; *Older Adults; Peer Influence; Persistence; *Social Support Groups
IDENTIFIERS *Job Club; Older Workers

ABSTRACT

Older job seekers are more likely than younger individuals to discontinue their search efforts because of the frustration inherent in job finding. Because of its ability to effectively increase job placement among other groups, due in part to the support and tangible assistance available in its small group format, a job club program was developed for older job seekers, with the intent of fostering effective and persistent job seeking. Persons requesting assistance (N=48) were randomly assigned to the job club or a control group; each job seeker was assessed four times at four week intervals. Data analyses showed that at the 12-week follow up 74% of job club participants were employed compared to 22% of the control group. The job club was significantly superior to the control condition on variables of income and hours worked. There appears to be strong support for concluding that the job club program's effects are influenced by the support and help generated within the small group of job seekers. (WAS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED229694

A COMPETENCY ORIENTED SMALL GROUP INTERVENTION: OLDER WORKER JOB CLUB

DENIS GRAY
Department of Psychology
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, North Carolina 27650

For presentation at the 1982 Annual Convention
of the American Psychological
Association of America, Washington, D.C.
August 27, 1982

Presented in a Symposium: Field Experiments in Aging: Implications for Theory and Practice

The preparation of this paper was supported in part by Administration on Aging Dissertation Research Grant 90-AT-2020/01. The author thanks the Tri-County Office on Aging, Lansing, Michigan, for helping to carry out the Older Worker-Retiree Job Club Research Project.

CG 016665

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official N. position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Denis Gray
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The thrust of this symposium focuses attention on two major questions all of us must consider when we set out to perform action research, in this instance in the aging field: 1) How - or more specifically at what level of social aggregation, should we intervene and 2) What research design should we use to evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts. Since I believe the question of research design and the desirability of longitudinal field experiments is more clean cut, I will not comment at length on this topic. Instead I will use most of my time to describe an illustrative field experiment in the aging area and to comment briefly on the issue of social aggregation and intervention levels.

A recent Harris poll revealed that almost 80% of older individuals (and almost 90% of younger adults) would prefer some workforce involvement to complete retirement after age 65 (Harris, 1981). However only a small fraction (under 15% of people over 65) actually work. This statistic illustrates the scope of the so-called older worker problem - many older people would like more or continued workforce participation but can't get it. It is a complex problem which even a cursory review would reveal has multiple causes including lack of job skills, poor job search performance, ageist hiring practices, and institutional disincentives to continued workforce participation. Thus it will also require remedies at multiple levels of intervention. A point I will return to later. In the case at hand, I will focus on one contributor to the problem - poor job search performance and a program which uses small group processes as a critical mechanism for improving job search competence.

In general, the job search problem of older people is not unique although it seems to be more extreme, (Sheppard and Beletsky, 1966)

particularly in terms of job search discouragement. Older job seekers are more likely than younger individuals groups to reduce or give up their search because of the frustrations inherent in job finding. Although never used with older individuals before, a recently developed program - the job club - (Azrin and Flores, 1975) had produced increased placement with other groups - in part apparently, through the support and tangible assistance available within its small group format. Based on this information a decision was made to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of the job club and confirm the utility of its small group processes.

The Older Worker Job Club was a relatively complex program based on learning and support group principles which was designed to empower the older job seeker. Viewed at a theoretical level the program was premised on the ability of modeling, role playing, social reinforcement, feedback, information, and peer support to produce behavioral, attitudinal, motivational, skill and knowledge changes in participants - resulting in increased job search competence. Viewed at a functional level the program involved bi-weekly task oriented group meetings run by a group leader. During meetings individuals reviewed and set job search goals, received training and job leads, and provided each other with support and encouragement. The intent of the program was to foster effective and persistant job seeking.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the job club model a naturalistic, longitudinal field experiment was established and run under the auspices of the local area agency on aging. Individuals who requested assistance and agreed to participate in the study were randomly assigned to receive either the job club program or a treatment-as-usual control program. Control

subjects were referred to an older worker specialist at the local state run employment service. As you can see from Figure 1, each subject was assessed four times. These assessments took place at P a pre-measure which is identified as Week 0, four weeks, eight weeks and 12 weeks after P. Since a single wave of subjects would have been an inadequate sample for analysis, additional waves of subjects also entered the program and experienced the same assessments. The final sample included 48 subjects, 24 Job Club and 24 Control. The experiment took approxmately eight months to complete from day 1 to the final assessment of the last wave of subjects.

Although data was collected on a wide range of outcome and process areas, for our purposes, I will only report and discuss my findings relating the program's effectiveness and the extent to which peer support and expanded personal networks appear to be responsible for the program effect.

Analyses of the primary and secondary outcome measures revealed that the older worker job club was very effective. As you can see from Figure 3, by the 12 week follow-up 74% of older worker job club subjects were employed compared to only 22% of control subjects. In fact, the job club produced a higher rate of employment after 4 weeks, 39% than the control program produced after 12 weeks. In addition, as you can see from Figure 4 and 5, the job club was significantly superior to the control condition on the income and hours worked variables.

Although process finding are by no means as clear cut, they do provide a basis for concluding that the small group format of the job club plays a significant role in making the program

work. When asked "How many people are helping you find a job?" job club participants reported significantly more helpers, primarily because of nomination of peers within the group. Although not quantitatively analyzed participants frequently cited the support they received from peers as the critical ingredient in the program's success (in response to a question about their program). Although some evidence also indicates that job club participants become better and more knowledgeable job seekers, there appears to be a strong basis for concluding that the program's effects are potentiated by the support and help generated within the small group of job seekers.

In conclusion, there appears to be substantial support for the utility of the small group job club program in increasing employment among older people. Although these findings could be used to argue for the ascendancy of small group strategies such a position would only compound the harm done by those who tell us that we must devote all our efforts to systems level initiatives. As Rappaport acknowledges but fails to emphasize real progress in solving complex social problems will require interventions at multiple if not all intervention levels. Regretably potentially useful change agentry if left undone because it won't do enough - fix everything.

As the remainder of today's session should reveal, the message in the current findings appear to be - if you want to have an impact don't leave any stone - or intervention level - unturned, including the small group level.

Footnote:

1 Gray, D.O. A Job Club for Older Workers and Retirees: An Experimental Evaluation of Outcome and Process. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 1980.

References:

Azrin, N.H., Flores, T., and Kaplan, S.J., "Job Club: A Group Assisted Program for Obtaining Employment." Behavior Research and Therapy, 13, 1975, 17-27.

Harris, L. Aging in the Eighties: America In Transition. A survey conducted for the National Council on Aging, Washington, D.C. 1981

Sheppard, H.L. and A.H. Belitsky, The Job Hunt, Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1966.

Figure 1
Research Design, Measures and Subject Waves by Time*

WAVE	COND.		TIME →						
1	JC	Measure	PX	F1	F2	F3			
		Weeks	01	4	8	12			
	C	Measure	PX	F1	F2	F3			
		Weeks	01	4	8	12			
2	JC	Measure		PX	F1	F2	F3		
		Weeks		01	4	8	12		
	C	Measure		PX	F1	F2	F3		
		Weeks		01	4	8	12		
3	JC	Measure			PX	F1	F2	F3	
		Weeks			01	4	8	12	
	C	Measure			PX	F1	F2	F3	
		Weeks			01	4	8	12	
4	JC	Measure				PX	F1	F2	F3
		Weeks				01	4	8	12
	C	Measure				PX	F1	F2	F3
		Weeks				01	4	8	12

LEGEND: P=Premeasure; F1=Follow Up 1; F2=Follow Up 2; F3=Follow Up 3; JC=Job Club; C=Control; X=Intervention Begins

*Weeks within each wave are exact; weeks between waves and over entire study are compressed for illustrative purposes.

Figure 2

Measures by Assessment Area and Assessment Waves

Assessment Area / Measure	Assessment Wave I	P	F1	F2	F3
Participant Measures					
Demographic	X	X			
Primary Outcome Measures					
Placement			X	X	X
Employment		X	X	X	X
Income/Hours		X	X	X	
Secondary Outcome Measures					
Placement Descriptors			X	X	X
Job Satisfaction			X	X	
Process Measures-Sources of Treatment Efficacy					
Knowledge		X	X	X	
Job Search Activity/Day		X	X	X	
Job Search Network		X	X	X	
Expectations (a)		X	X	X	
Program Description			X	X	
Job Club: Attendance (b)			X	X	X
Job Club: Co-members named (b)			X	X	
Process Measures-Subjective Psychological Reactions					
RDI-Activity		X	X	X	
RDI-Financial		X	X	X	
RDI-Health		X	X	X	
RDI-People		X	X	X	
Personal Optimism		X	X	X	
Programatic Optimism		X	X	X	
External Optimism		X	X	X	

(a) not asked after permanent job found
(b) asked of Job Club Ss

Figure 3

PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS EMPLOYED OVER TIME

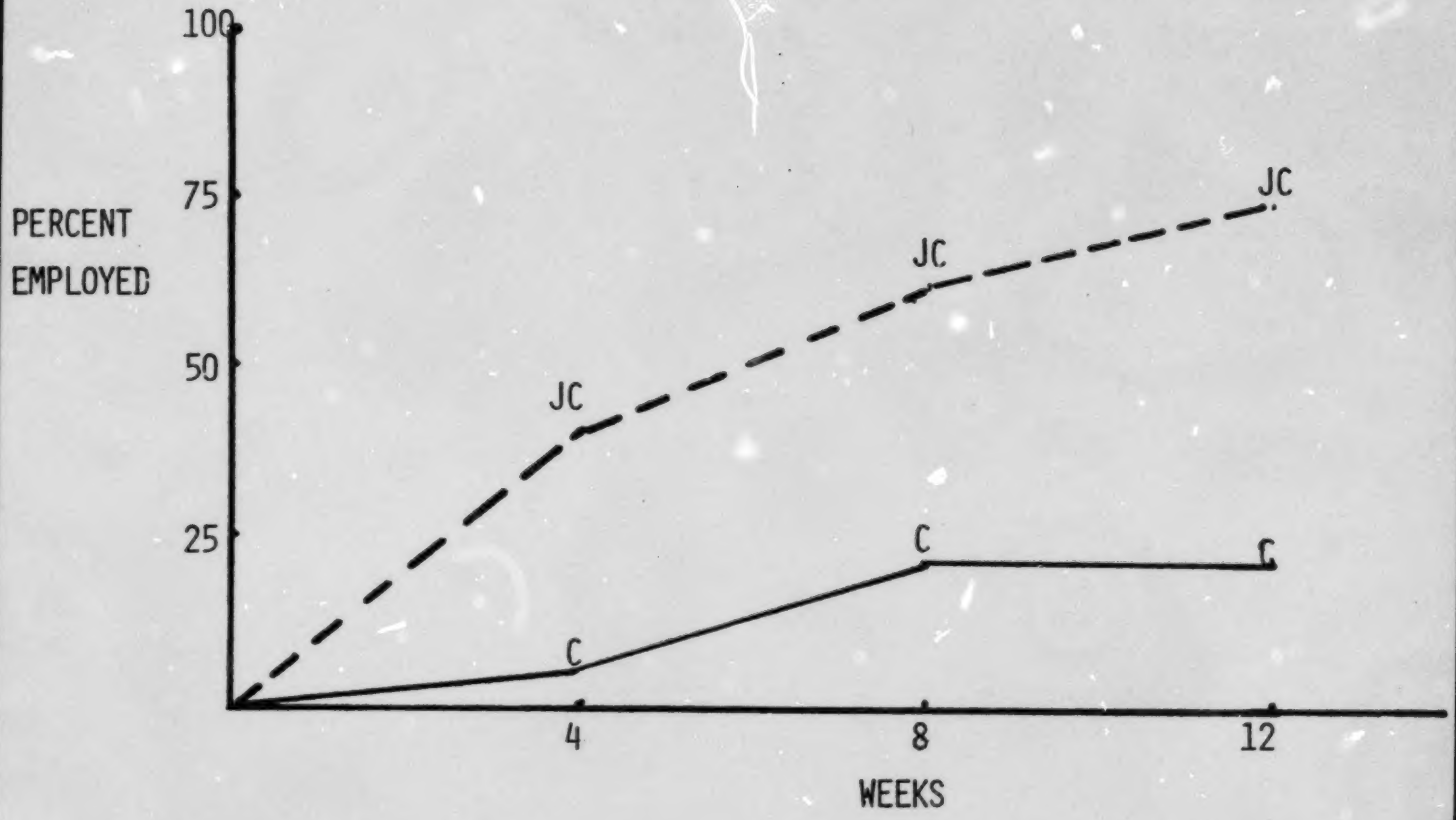

Figure 4

HOURS WORKED AND INCOME PER MONTH AFTER 8 WEEK FOLLOWUP